

**Testimony of Eileen Melody**  
**School Counselor, Mansfield Middle School**  
*in opposition of*  
**S.B. 1095 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS**  
Education Committee - March 1, 2023

Representative Currey, Senator McCrory, Representative McCarty, Senator Berthel, Vice Chair Leeper, Vice Chair Winfield and esteemed members of the Education Committee, my name is Eileen Melody and I am a school counselor in Mansfield and a member of the Governing Board of the Connecticut School Counselor Association. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 1095 - AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS.

Senate Bill 1095 states that *(ii) that individuals who are school counselors, social workers, psychologists, aides or other staff members and have appropriate training and ongoing support may be assigned the duties of a school resource officer.*

School resource officers (SROs) and school counselors hold different and unique roles within a school system. As a school counselor for over 25 years, it has been and continues to be my role to provide advocacy for all students in the realms of academical , social-emotional and career development.

I begin each day as a support to a homeroom teacher. At this time, I listen to my students morning challenges and preparations for the school day ahead. Then I respond to parent phone calls, outside agencies and therapists, sharing information about student needs and ways to follow up with support. I meet with teachers and administrators in planned and impromptu meetings as well to share information about students' social-emotional and academic needs. Together we determine how to allocate the necessary resources to these students. Throughout my day, I am counseling students one on one to help them cope with peer issues, family matters, academic struggles, and feelings of anxiety and depression. Each day I facilitate two small groups to work on social cognition, teaching students the skills needed for effectively interacting with others. I have been trained in each of these areas - 1) individual and small group counseling, 2) consultation and collaboration with families, colleagues and agencies, and 3) developing school-wide climate and school culture programs to support students' social-emotional, academic and career growth. Personally I have continued my training in areas of equity, trauma and cultural and gender awareness.

The role and duty of a school counselor is different from that of a SRO. A SRO is a sworn officer of the law who is present in a school for the purpose of identifying and deterring those who do not belong in a school building. SROs are in school buildings to maintain order, are armed, and carry other means of restraint. I do not have training in these areas, and I do not see that these roles can be intertwined without forfeiting my primary objective as a school counselor, advocating for my students.

At present, school counselors throughout Connecticut are struggling with meeting the needs of students because of our high caseload numbers, surpassing the American School Counselor Association's recommended ratio of 1 counselor to 250 students. We have created sound delivery systems for the work we do so we can attempt to reach as many students as possible, educating them in academic, social-emotional and career development skills. We are trained educators; we are not law enforcement and we do not practice physical restraint to reach conflict resolution and order.

I ask that you reconsider including school counselors in Senate Bill 1095 as a possible substitute for SROs and modify this bill to reflect my request.

I thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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